



Memorandum Planning

April 3, 2013

To: Planning Commission
From: James Pechous, City Planner
Subject: Review of thoughts and comments from the Planning Commission
Architectural Tour.
Copies: James Holloway, Community Development Director
Jeffrey Hook, Principal Planner

On March 8, 2013, the Planning Commission, staff and several members of the public viewed 14 as-built development projects for their architectural quality, compatibility with adjacent buildings and consistency with the Design Guidelines. During the tour, City staff and Planning Commissioners rode in two vans, so there was only limited opportunity for public input and shared group discussion. This study session will allow discussion of the issues, lessons and possible policy changes raised by the projects we viewed.

This item is for discussion only. Staff is not recommending a specific action or change; however if the Commission wishes to recommend the City Council amend policy, for example, a change to the City's Design Guidelines, it should schedule the item for discussion at a public hearing to allow public notice and testimony.

Commission feedback on the need for or format of future architectural tours would be appreciated. To help focus the discussion, the tour outline is attached.



Architectural Review Tour

ITINERARY AND INTRODUCTION

Friday, March 8, 2013

1 pm – 5:30 pm

(Meet at Community Development Department, 910 Calle Negocio- public lobby)

Introduction

Welcome to the architectural review tour! Today we'll view 14 as-built projects for their architectural qualities, compatibility with adjacent buildings and consistency with the Design Guidelines. This tour is part of the City's on-going effort to deliver high-quality customer service and help ensure attractive, high-quality development. It's all about *learning* from our experiences and seeing how design decisions on plans translate into a successful (or unsuccessful) projects on the ground. Visiting approved development projects is the best way to learn how design choices affect the finished project and by extension, how we might improve the City's design review process, codes or design guidelines. It's sometimes said that architectural review cannot *ensure* good design; only prevent "bad" design. But San Clemente's experience shows that we can (and in fact, do) promote high-quality, attractive architecture through design review. Over time, the quality of the built environment design in San Clemente has improved due, in part, to improvements in the design review, permit and inspection processes. Yet, to be honest, there are still some projects that don't turn out as expected; or that on reflection, might have been improved with different design choices. On this tour, we'll see both types of projects and briefly discuss key design concerns and results. In a sense, this is a "teaser" tour, since there are many more building and landscape design projects that warrant a visit and discussion. After this tour is done, staff will suggest a follow-up study session, including the possibility of a follow-up tour later in 2013.

Itinerary

The tour begins in the north part of the City with the relatively new Target "big box" store and proceeds generally in a counter-clockwise direction from there. We'll visit both commercial and residential sites. And we will stop and get out of our vans to see four projects up close: Target, Fire Station/Senior Center, Ralph's Market and Paramount Tire. Planning staff will meet us at these locations to introduce the projects. Due to limited time, however, the remaining visits must be brief stops or slow "drive-bys"; we won't get out of the vans. Along the way, commissioners are encouraged to raise questions, take notes, discuss "lessons learned" and identify issues or possible changes to Design Guidelines for full discussion later. While this tour is technically a public meeting and was advertised as such, there will be only limited opportunity to get public input. Consequently, detailed discussions of the issues, lessons and possible changes should be held at City Hall.

The Itinerary continues on the following pages with a photo and brief summary of each development project, in the approximate order we'll visit them:

Your "Tour Guide", Jim Pechous, City Planner

Stop 1:

Name: Target Store

Location:

Type of Use: Retail



Key Design Issues:

- Building massing/articulation/detailing as viewed from North La Pata
- Landscape screening
- Slope bank landscaping along Avenida Vista Hermosa
- Retaining wall treatments

Lessons Learned?

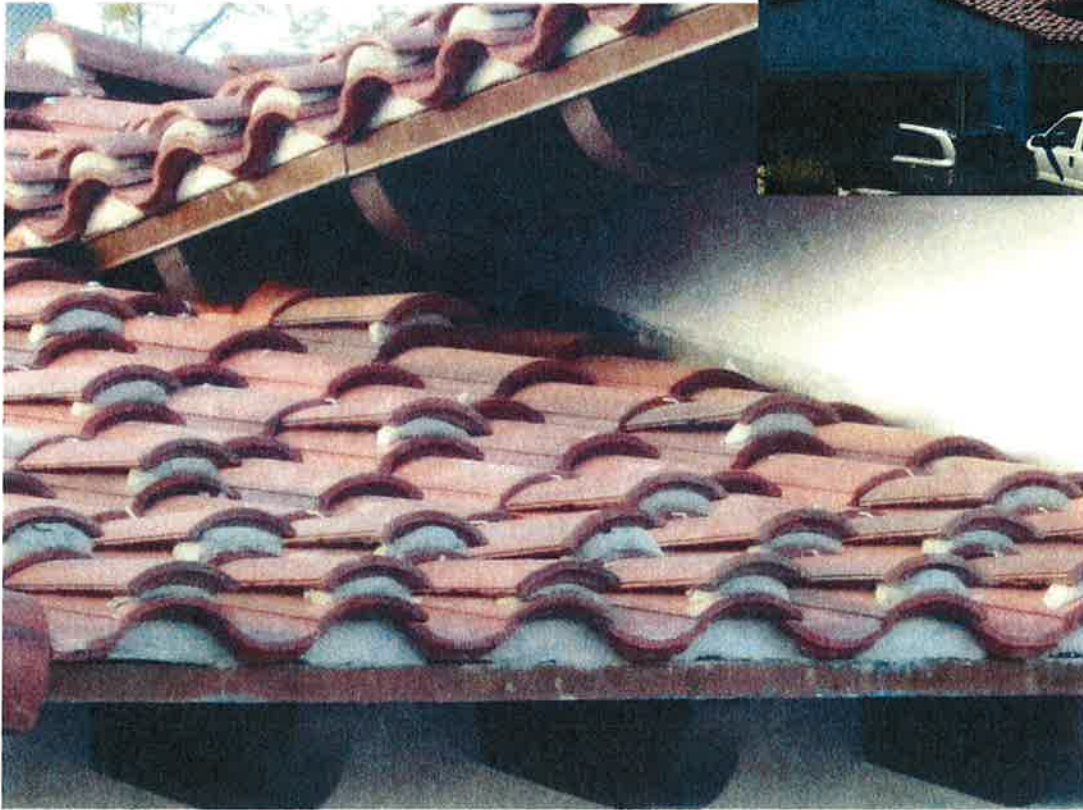
- Do not only focus on front entrance to a building. Make sure to evaluate all sides of the building and account for future entryways into the City
- Loading dock needs to be screened
- Look at tree selection, number and growth rates
- Crib walls are filling in well

Stop 2:

Name: Robison House Tile Roof

Location: 196 Avenida La Cuesta

Type of Use: Low Density Residential



Key Design Issues:

- Use of "S tile" roofing
- Design compatibility with historic single-barrel roof tiles

Lessons Learned?

- S-Tile concrete roofing can be used with booster tiles and mortar to more closely achieve the desired look of a traditional barrel clay tile roof.
- It is pertinent that roof installation follow standard conditions of approval for barrel tile roofs:
 - 100 percent of the tiles in the first two rows of tiles have boosters and mortar
 - Rake and ridgelines shall have boosters and mortar
 - Boosters and mortar packed on 25 percent of the tiles on the remaining field.

Stop 3:

Name: Farmers and Merchants Bank

Location: 621 North El Camino Real

Type of Use: Retail/Office



Key Design Issues:

- Preliminary direction given: Property not within A-Overlay requiring SCR architecture.
- Architect spent thousands developing a modern architectural style.



- Development Management Team recommends SCR architecture based upon the Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan, which recommends area be included within A-Overlay in the future.

Lessons Learned?

- Important to have clear Policy direction on architectural style within specified geographic boundaries. Zoning Code never amended to reflect the Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan.
- Importance of QAP: Funky rafter tails.



Stop 4:

Name: Mattos residence remodel

Location: 113 Avenida De La Grulla

Type of Use: Residential

Before project



Current photo



Key Design Issues:

- Remodel and 82% expansion of 1,150 sq ft non-conforming structure. The project includes: 1) 285 sq ft first story addition at rear of building, 2) new patio cover on front elevation, and 3) 665 sq ft second story addition.
- Residence has nonconforming side yard setbacks.
- First example of project allowed as a result of the Nonconforming Ordinance update (adopted in early 2012).
- Under new rules, small residences (less than 1,400 sq ft) can be expanded over 50% (up to 2,100 sq ft) and remain nonconforming with the approval of a Minor Architectural Permit.
- Under old rules, it was easier and less costly to demolish small dwellings and construct much larger homes that maximize a site.

Lessons Learned?

- The new Nonconforming Ordinance is successfully incentivizing the preservation of small houses. This project shows it is possible to expand small residences greater than 50% and remain nonconforming, while maintaining the character of neighborhoods.

Stop 5:

Name: Bulwa Duplex
Location: 900 Buena Vista
Type of Use: Residential



Key Design Issues:

- The scale and massing of the duplex adjacent to the historical house was a concern when reviewing the project. The second level deck along Buena Vista was setback to reduce the mass adjacent to the historic house. A segment of the building wall along the side property line shared with the historic house was set back an additional foot to reduce the massing to the historic house and its back yard.
- The architectural design was determined to be compatible with the historic house because it is a Spanish Colonial Revival Design and with the additional setbacks provided.
- The landscaping along Buena Vista for both properties has screened the view to the new duplex.

Lessons Learned?

It is important to design a project with a five sided review approach. This will ensure a quality design on all sides and not just the elevations fronting the street.

Stop 6:

Name: Schoner House

Location: 236 W. Marquita

Type of Use: Residential, Medium-Density



Key Design Issues:

- 2,157 addition to a Historic home
- Historic Preservation Program Agreement (HPPA) property

Lessons Learned?

The applicant utilized the topography of the site and the available property at the back of the house to place a significant addition that is not visible from the street.

Stop 7:

Name: Avenida Granada Duplexes

Location: 229-231 Avenida Granada

Type of Use: Residential, Medium-Density



Key Design Issues:

- **Architectural style**
- **Design variation between three buildings**
- **Neighborhood compatibility**
- **Site layout**

Lessons Learned?

- The duplexes were designed to be different and unique from one another.
- The contractor/applicant agreed to do various aesthetic and architectural details to ensure the project met the high architectural standards of the Architectural Overlay while working through the discretionary process.
- In the field the designs became more “cookie cutter” Spanish Colonial Revival architecture as the contractor did not follow the design of the plans.
- Staff continued to work to get the best product possible, even bringing the project back to DRSC due to the amount of changes in the field.

Stop 8:

Name: Fire Station/Senior Center

Location: 121 Victoria

Type of Use: Public



Key Design Issues:

- Changes in Architects, Planners and Contractors
- Approved elevations not matching working drawings
- OCFA requirements effect on architecture and site design
- Change orders and their cost

Lessons Learned?

- Changes in personal during various phases of a project can have significant impacts on the final project design. It is important to get new personal up to speed quickly when these transitions occur.
- We need to do a better job in the project design phase and understanding the requirements of other agencies, in this case OCFA and developing realistic solutions. The apparatus bay design had to be brought back to DRSC several times for redesign.
- Need to gain a better understanding on how change is design impact cost.

Stop 9:

Name: La Forge House

Location: 320 Avenida Gaviota

Type of Use: Residential, Low-Density



Key Design Issues:

- Remodel/addition to historic home
- Second-story addition
- Conformance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards

Lessons Learned?

- The project was a large addition compared to the size of the original historic home, and there was concern about the second floor and if it would become the prominent feature when the historic structure is viewed from the street.
- There was extensive discussion regarding demolition of the rear portion of the historic structure.
 - While reviewed and approved during the discretionary process, there was concerns during the building process regarding the impact to the historical integrity of the structure.
- There had been several additions to the house through out the 50s, 60s, and 70s which damaged a lot of the historical integrity of the residence and had added significant square footage to the residence.
- The construction of the residence to the left of the project site, it changed the character and historic orientation of the residence.
- What remained of the historic and character defining features of the residence, there was an emphasis of preserving and refurbishing, including the fountain at the front of the residence (shown above), the re-use of the original roof tiles, and the refurbishing of the large side covered patio.

Stop 10:

Name: Motorcycle Company

Location:

Type of Use: Retail



Key Design Issues:

- The sign was integrated into the design of the building and an after thought. The style of the sign, construction and location was compatible with the architectural style of the building which is required by the Design Guidelines.
- The Sign Exception Permit was justified because the commercial building is setback from the street and the view to the building when traveling north and south along El Camino Real is obstructed by the adjacent buildings and mature landscaping.

Lessons Learned?

- Discretionary sign applications should be integrated into the building design to enhance the aesthetics of the project.

Stop 11:

Name: Chevron Station

Location: 1729 South El Camino Real

Type of Use: Retail



Key Design Issues:

- Service station remodel
- Standpipes
- Removal of the pole sign

Lessons Learned?

- The City's policy regarding a change of use for service stations, in particularly the addition of a convenience store and removal of the repair portions of the site, was re-enforced when the project was taken all the way to City Council for review of the pole sign issue.
- The applicant/station owner stated that he could not operate his business without the pole sign. The City Council approved the project, with the removal of the pole sign.
- As a test, the applicant covered his pole sign for a month, and saw minimal change to his sales, and ultimately decided to move forward with the upgrades to the site and removal of the pole sign.
- The architectural improvements bring the site more in conformance with the City's adopted architectural style.
- This project is also an example for other service stations and the potential of changing uses and maintaining pole signs.

Stop 12:

Name: Ralph's Market

Location: 905 South El Camino Real

Type of Use: Retail



Key Design Issues:

- Tower scale/relationship to views
- Signage
- Circulation

Lessons Learned?

- Site was finally approved with just a remodel and addition to the grocery store.
- Substantial exterior changes were made to bring the building more in line with Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, and to be an example of future development along the South El Camino Real corridor leading towards downtown.
- During construction there was debate concerning the height of the tower, and views from the freeway. While the tower was reviewed during the discretionary process and found to be consistent with the scale of the building and project site, there were concerns.
- In particular, there was concern that there was going to be signage on all sides as well as usable space for offices and other uses within the tower.
- Another issue, that is still being worked on today, is the circulation of the site.
- The applicant attempted to create the same one-way circulation for the site that they originally had. Though this has created some problems and back up onto South El Camino Real.
- Engineering included conditions of approval to allow for modifications to be made to the parking lot if determined necessary to resolve problems.
- Engineering is continuing to work with Ralphs to modify the stop light and onsite circulation to address community concerns.

Stop 13:

Name: Paramount Tires

Location: 603 South El Camino Real

Type of Use: Retail/Commercial-Service



Key Design Issues:

- No defined auto-related commercial remodel
- Deco Architectural style and materials
- Compatibility with adjacent historic buildings

Lessons Learned?

- Process lead to a fresh look on how we look at auto oriented uses on ECR. ECR distinguishes history distinguishes itself from the Downtown core because it has always been automobile oriented. The development of future design guidelines should consider this.
- For some remodels alternative but compatible architectural styles to SCR can be successful

Stop 14:

Name: McDonald's Restaurant

Location: 650 Avenida Pico

Type of Use: Retail



Key Design Issues:

- Corporate "branding" vs. City standards
- Architectural details

Lessons Learned?

- Almost a year of work was put in by staff prior to a formal submittal to get the design of the building consistent with the Design Guidelines.
- Throughout the process, McDonalds was difficult to compromise with as branding is a major component of McDonalds, and they wanted to use their standard design and features.
- Through several meetings, and ultimately compromise on both sides, the site architecture and circulation was greatly improved.
- There are unique details on this project that "had" to be included, most importantly the yellow and orange awnings above the doors.
- Additionally, the only internally illuminated signs are the "Golden Arches" and staff and DRSC was able to work with corporate McDonalds to get the metal pin mounted "McDonalds" name halo lit for the primary signage, and reduced the modern looking drive thru features that are typical on other McDonalds.
- In the end the store owner and corporate McDonalds were very happy with the unique San Clemente McDonalds architecture and overall design.